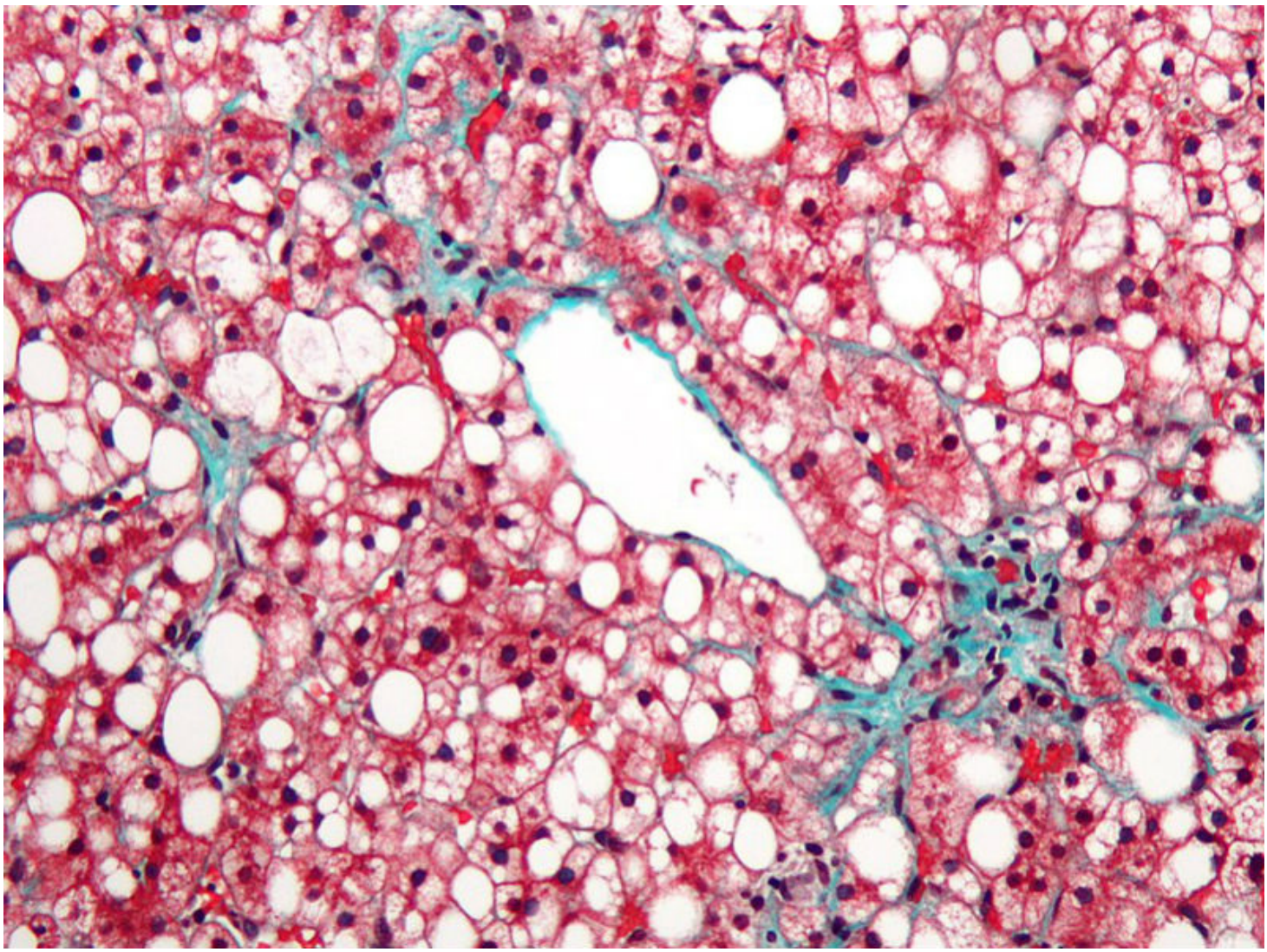
Research

NASH-linked gene discovery could inspire new drugs to treat liver damage

by Arlene Weintraub | Jul 19, 2019 10:59am



Researchers discovered that the gene AEBP1 drives liver fibrosis in patients with nonalcoholic steatohepatitis. (Nephron, Wikimedia Commons)

The disease nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) is a common cause of liver damage, making it among the most sought-after targets in drug discovery. A research team led by the Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen) hope a new discovery of a gene that drives the disease will accelerate the search for cures.

The team found that increased activity of the gene AEBP1 is associated with severe liver fibrosis in NASH patients. AEBP1 regulates the expression of at least nine other genes that have been previously tied to fibrosis, the researchers **reported** in the study, published in the journal PLoS One.

RELATED: ADA: Boehringer grabs Yuhan's NASH prospect in $870M biobucks deal

TGen, which is an affiliate of the City of Hope, worked with scientists at Temple University and the Geisinger Obesity Institute to study gene expression in samples taken from NASH patients with severe liver fibrosis. They found that AEBP1 expression was ramped up during the activation of the liver's "stellate" cells, which play a major role in fibrosis.

About the Author

Arlene Weintraub
Contributing Writer